

BANNER RIDGE WINTER YURT GUIDE

The Banner Ridge yurt is ideally located for Nordic skiers and snowshoers. Over 27 miles of groomed and 50 miles of marked ski trails are 200 yards from the front door. The yurt is located just off a high ridge in a protected north-facing bowl. Looking north and down over 3000 feet in elevation you can see the South Fork of the Payette River, Bear Valley, and Scott Mountain. At 6500 feet, the view of the Sawtooth Mountains is spectacular. The snow is usually powder and very deep. This yurt is a telemarker and snowboarder heaven with its long, open slopes. Thousands of feet of untracked powder are available 100 feet away. Snow is usually available for skiing from December 1 to April 15.

Reservations

Reservations for stays within IDPR Idaho City Backcountry Yurts can be online at www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov or toll free 1-866-634-3246. Reservations are accepted 9-months in advance of your intended stay and no later than 48-hours prior to your intended arrival. A non-refundable fee of \$6 is assessed at the time your reservation is made. All fees must be paid in advance of your stay.

Yurts are reserved from 2 p.m. the day of your reservation until 1 p.m. the following afternoon. The maximum length of stay in the same yurt is 5 days.

Difficulty:

Intermediate. The difficulty of touring trails can increase in poor snow conditions and weather. The route to Banner Ridge yurt includes a long steep section at the beginning and may require you to remove your skis and walk up. Climbing skins are recommended for those with heavy packs. Individuals should be thoroughly prepared and travel with someone who has been to the yurt and can readily find it. The Elkhorn Loop trail is generally groomed Thursday or Friday from December 1 to March 15. You should not count on the trail being groomed, but a freshly groomed trail will substantially reduce the amount of energy necessary to get to the yurt.

Where to Park:

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is about 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21. An Idaho Park N' Ski permit is required to park in the lot Nov 15th to Apr 30th. Please park vehicles close together on the high end of the parking lot next to the highway. You should also bring a shovel with you because you might have to dig your car out in case of heavy snow. Do not park on Highway 21.

How To Get to the Yurt:

The trails are marked with blue or yellow diamond shapes, called blazes, attached to trees. The recommended approach is to take the Elkhorn Loop trail

clockwise to the yurt turn-off. Go past the first intersection of the Elkhorn Loop trail, just .2 miles from the parking lot, continue straight up the Elkhorn Loop trail. You will pass the Banner trail intersection and continue up onto the scenic Banner Ridge. After traversing the ridge, where the trail turns south, look for a two-foot yellow diamond sign and follow this trail through the saddle in the hilltop and down to the yurt. **Or**, you can stay on the blue blazed Elkhorn Loop trail until you get back into the trees. Look for a large "Bear Crossing" sign at the Cougar trail intersection. From the "Bear Crossing" sign you will follow the Cougar trail for about 50 yards to the old roadbed. Stay left for about 350 yards to get to the yurt.

Elevation Gain and Distance:

About 690 feet rise over 2 miles (one-way) via the Elkhorn Loop trail directly to the top of Banner Ridge. This is the shortest route with one long steep section to climb.

Wood Pile:

Wood for the stove is located under the deck.

Water:

If you melt snow for water, we recommend boiling it for 10 minutes before using it. There may be water available other than melting snow over the wood stove. The route to the water source is marked with 3"x 3" red, square blazes placed on wood 4"x 4" posts. From the yurt, travel down the drainage about 10 yards and down 50 feet in elevation until you come to a roadbed. Turn right on this road and travel 200 yards. At this point, look downhill about 30 feet to see a 4x4 wooden post sticking out of the snow. Five feet downhill from the base of this pole is a spring that comes out of a white plastic pipe. This spring may or may not be frozen.

Special Equipment Needed:

Several members of the party should carry portable snow shovels.

Avalanche and Whiteout Hazard:

Chances of an avalanche are low as long as Elkhorn loop trail is used. Avalanches can occur on nearby slopes. The final one-mile to the yurt is on Banner Ridge, which is a high treeless, exposed ridge. We do not recommend travel to the yurt in high wind ,heavy snow conditions or at night. Whiteouts are common along this section of trail.

Maps Needed:

Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System, USFS Forest Road, and USGS 7.5 minute topographic, "Lowman."

**Global Positioning System Locations
UTM (in NAD 83 Projection):**

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 11T 0611723 4875455

Banner Ridge Yurt: 11T 0613227 4877063

Lat/Long (in NAD 83 Projection)

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 44.02375052/-115.60594129

Banner Ridge Yurt: 44.03799104/-115.58683885

Elevations:

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 5,783 feet

Banner Ridge Yurt: 6,473 feet

WARNING:

Winter travel and the use of a yurt can be dangerous. Do not undertake yurt trips without careful preparation and a serious discussion of the dangers with ALL members of your group.

**PLEASE, DO NOT FEED ANY WILD ANIMALS. IT
CAN LEAD TO THE ANIMALS CHEWING OR
TEARING THE YURT SKIN.**